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SPYING

Citizenship Activity Pack

Spy Implants

RFID chips - personal privacy and security

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Purpose

To develop skills in:

- analysing information and its sources
- justifying a personal opinion about issues, problems or events
- contributing to group and exploratory class discussions, and taking part in debates
- using imagination to consider, express and empathise with other people's experiences and views.

Age range (years)

7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16



Time needed

1 – 1.5 hours



Background

Imagine if you had a road traffic accident and the ambulance team was able to get all your medical information through a chip implanted under your skin. Or what if parents could track their children's whereabouts in a theme park and so prevent them from getting lost?

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags are turning ideas like these into reality as well as being put to more mundane uses such as 'intelligent' package tracking.

In this activity students explore the uses of RFID technology and then debate the key questions arising around security and privacy.

Steps

1. Split the class into groups.
2. Ask students to imagine they each have an RFID implant under their skin. (They are about the size of two grains of rice). What would it feel like? How would it feel if you couldn't take it out?

3. Ask each group to create a reason for having the RFID implant and to make a list of:

- the information it would give access to
- the advantages of having the implant
- the disadvantages

The newspaper stories on page 2 will give students some initial ideas.

4. Get the groups to share their ideas with the whole class. Which is the most realistic? Scary? Etc.
5. Use the 'prompt questions' on page 4 to stimulate wider discussion. Or, if there is time use the information on page 5 to set up a debate with speakers for and against the motion – 'The use of RFID technology is a threat to our privacy'.

Spy Implants: news stories

From The World News

CHIPS WITH EVERYTHING

Imagine having a tiny microchip injected under your skin. It might sound crazy but some nightclubs are now offering their members this service. The tiny RFID chip might give access to VIP areas or act as a debit account from which to pay for drinks or food.

From Consumer Eye

CONSUMERS WORRIED ABOUT RFID TAGS

A recent survey reveals that consumers are very concerned about the use of radio frequency ID (RFID) tags by shops.

In a study that talked to 2,000 people, over half said they were worried that the tags, which are generally used to monitor stock levels, might infringe their privacy by monitoring their movements once they have left the shops.

Military Use

The US military is the biggest user of RFID tags. It keeps track of over a quarter of a million containers worldwide using the technology.

From The Daily Echo

THEME PARK FINDS LOST KIDS USING RFID TECHNOLOGY

A theme park in Denmark has launched a new child-tracking system that uses a combination of RFID and wireless network technologies. Parents are given wristbands for their children. Using their mobile phones they can track their kids to within about five feet should they wander off.

Spy Implants: questions to prompt discussion

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of RFID?
- Would you have an implant with information that companies could use to give you special offers on your favourite things?
- Could governments use RFID to track criminals?
- New-style travel cards use RFID technology to make paying for travel and getting on transport easier. But they could potentially be used to track our movements. Is this an infringement of our privacy or might it be useful, for instance, when trying to find someone in an emergency?
- Would having an implanted RFID chip make us behave differently towards our friends, family, teachers or employers?

Debate

Motion: RFID technology is a threat to our privacy

Possible arguments in support of the motion

- Governments could use RFID to track innocent people and breach their human rights – perhaps by finding and suppressing critics of the state
- Criminals could steal our RFID tags and use them to commit crimes, using our identity as a cover
- Advertisers could use RFID to exploit information about the way we shop and try to make us buy more things we don't want

Possible arguments against the motion

- RFID can help us access medical histories quickly – especially useful if a patient is unable to communicate
- Companies can use RFID to track their products and so make sure they are being efficiently and safely transported and stored. This might mean your local shop is never short of stock
- RFID can be used to help us access our bank accounts directly – saving us from carrying cash or cash cards and protecting us from thieves